

**Opening Statement of Chairman Tom Davis  
Government Reform Committee Hearing  
“Steroid Use in Sports Part II: Examining the National Football League’s Policy on  
Anabolic Steroids and Related Substances”  
April 27, 2005**

Good morning, and welcome to today’s hearing on the National Football League (NFL) and the use of performance-enhancing drugs. The purpose of this hearing is to consider the NFL’s drug policy; how the testing policy is implemented; how it effectively addresses the use of prohibited drugs by players; and the larger societal and public health ramifications of steroid use.

Fourteen years ago, anabolic steroids were added to the Controlled Substance Act as a Schedule III drug, making it illegal to possess or sell them without a valid prescription. Today, however, evidence strongly suggests that steroid use among teenagers – especially aspiring athletes – is a large and growing problem.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention tells us that more than 500,000 high school students have tried steroids, nearly triple the number just ten years ago. A second national survey, conducted in 2004 by the National Institute on Drug Abuse and the University of Michigan, found that over 40 percent of 12<sup>th</sup> graders described steroids as “fairly easy” or “very easy” to get, and the perception among high school students that steroids are harmful has dropped from 71 percent in 1992 to 56 percent in 2004.

The reality is, parents today are in the unenviable position of having to add anabolic steroids and performance-enhancing drugs to their teachings on the dangers of recreational drug use. The Associated Press reported yesterday that an alarming number of American girls – some as young as nine years old – are using steroids. Researchers say 7 percent of middle school girls – *7 percent* -- admit to trying anabolic steroids at least once; researchers also say that while most of these girls were looking to get more competitive on the playing field, some were just hoping to improve their appearance.

Clearly, it’s time to discuss how we got here.

In light of the societal impact of steroid use, the Committee decided to launch an investigation into the steroid policies of professional, amateur, collegiate, and high school athletics. Last month, we held our first hearing, aimed at evaluating Major League Baseball’s efforts to crack down on steroid use. After that hearing, the Committee sent letters to the NFL, National Basketball Association, National Hockey League, Major League Soccer, U.S. Soccer Federation, USA Cycling, USA Track & Field, and the Association of Tennis Professionals requesting information on their respective steroid policies.

Today’s hearing will be based on the information provided by the NFL to the Committee regarding its 2004 Policy on Anabolic Steroids and other Related Substances.

The dynamic is somewhat different than what we encountered at the MLB hearing. MLB and the Players' Association greeted word of our inquiry first as a nuisance, then as a negotiation. In contrast, both the NFL and its players' association have worked cooperatively with the Committee to educate us about their policy and the proactive steps the NFL has continued to take with regard to steroid testing. We've appreciated their cooperation and responsiveness.

Drug-testing experts have long hailed football's testing program as the top of the heap in professional sports. It's a policy that the league and players' association review quarterly and improve upon annually. It's a policy that has evolved along with advancements in science and technology. It's a policy with tough penalties that's getting tougher all the time.

But it's not perfect, and that's one of the reasons we're here today. The NFL's testing program has come under heightened scrutiny in recent weeks in the wake of news reports that three Carolina Panthers players filled steroid prescriptions within two weeks of playing in last year's Super Bowl.

Today we'll ask some serious questions to find out if we can make a good policy even better. Most questions will focus on the "what, how and when's" of the league's testing procedures.

I think we'll hear from the NFL and players' association about improvements they're making to their policy. I also hope they will address the steps they're taking to educate young people – especially young football players -- on the dangers of steroid use.

After all, that's why we've undertaken this investigation. More than just the reputation of baseball or football is at risk. Our primary focus remains on the message being sent to children. Children who play football and baseball and basketball and soccer. Children who idolize and emulate professional athletes.

Too many college athletes believe they have to consider steroids if they're going to make it to the pros; high school athletes, in turn, think steroids might be the key to getting a scholarship. It's time to break that cycle, and it needs to happen from the top down.

We'll hear about the vicious cycle – and the societal pressures that fuel it -- firsthand today from Bobby Barnes, head football coach at Buckeye Union High School in Arizona. Coach Barnes made the right decision; he suspended 10 of his players for using steroids. But some in his community criticized the move, and I can only wonder how we've arrived at a place where the drive to win is more important to some than not cheating, or not risking permanent harm to your health.

These hearings are the beginning, not the end. Today's hearing can give us important information about the prevalence of steroids in professional football; shine

light on the sometimes tragic results of steroid use by young athletes; and offer thoughts on where to take our investigation next.

Thoughts from the two high school football coaches with us today on how to steer kids away from steroids, and what to do when young athletes fall victim to their allure;

Thoughts from medical experts about how to better educate all Americans about the very real dangers of steroid use;

Thoughts from the NFL and players' association on how one professional sports league is addressing this problem, and the need to continually revisit testing effectiveness over time.

Our ongoing investigation already has spawned draft legislation authored by me and Mr. Waxman that would create uniform testing standards for all major sports leagues and associations. We think this is a critical next step, and we hope to introduce the legislation soon. Senator John McCain is also working on legislation along these lines.

But our job won't end when that bill becomes law. Public education and awareness will remain paramount. That's why I'm pleased that the advisory committee Mr. Waxman and I announced at the MLB hearing is beginning to take shape. The leagues and players' associations are still discussing the nuts and bolts with each other, but with the leadership of Curt Schilling and Frank Thomas and other high-profile athletes, I believe this advisory committee can accomplish great things.

Great things like getting more than 56 percent of teenagers to understand steroids are harmful. Like getting young girls to find healthy ways to enhance athletic performance or self-esteem. Like getting all sports leagues to acknowledge that their testing programs need improvement.

**The Committee will hear testimony from the following witnesses:**

Mr. Willie Stewart, Head Football Coach, Anacostia High School, Washington, DC

Mr. Bobby L. Barnes, Head Football Coach, Buckeye Union High School, Buckeye, AZ

Dr. Linn Goldberg, Professor of Medicine, Oregon Health Sciences University

Dr. Gary I. Wadler, Associate Professor of Clinical Medicine, New York University School of Medicine

Dr. John A. Lombardo, NFL Advisor on Anabolic Steroids and Related Substances

Dr. Bryan Finkle, NFL Consulting Toxicologist on Anabolic Steroids and Related Substances

Mr. Steve Courson, ex-NFL player, Pittsburgh Steelers, Tampa Bay Buccaneers

Mr. Paul Tagliabue, Commissioner, National Football League

Mr. Harold Henderson, Executive Vice President, Labor Relations, National Football League

Mr. Gene Upshaw, Executive Director, National Football League Players Association